MEDIA RELEASE

New 'family' of bombs in production

MCALESTER, Okla.-- A new family of bombs designed to make them safer from accidental detonation due to fire is in full rate production at McAlester Army Ammunition Plant (MCAAP), the Department of Defense's premier bomb and warhead producer.

The new bomb system, called "insensitive munitions," is being produced for the U.S. Navy and Air Force in their 500, 1,000 and 2,000 pound general purpose bombs as well as the 2,000 pound penetrator bomb, respectively.

The body itself, and in some cases the explosive, was redesigned to be less sensitive to a variety of threats. The body redesign permits the release of explosive gases. Bomb bodies without this device are more prone to build up of dangerous gases as the heat rises from a fire resulting in an explosion. This bomb body allows the buildup of burning explosive gases to escape through a venting system thus permitting the explosive to just burn.

A 1967 fire aboard the USS Forrestal that killed 134 Sailors and injured 161, was spread by "sympathetic" detonation of bombs located next to burning aircraft as a result of the buildup of explosive gases in the bomb body. The insensitive munition design reduces the chance bombs will detonate if fire breaks out, thus reducing the chance of a chain reaction of more bombs detonating; as was the case in the Forrestal incident.

An initial technical issue with the bomb body prevented full rate production but a five-member team composed of representatives from MCAAP, China Lake Naval Air Warfare Center, Eglin Air Force Base and Naval Surface Warfare Center, Indian Head Division, worked to improve the bomb's design and ensure certain parts were more robust. Full rate production has been running since April.

"MCAAP was on the ground floor by assisting with hardware design of the bomb casing. We provided input from day one," said Cris Clayton, MCAAP's bomb program manager.

-30-